

Arriving & Departing on the Yamanote-Sen

written by Guest Contributor | April 10, 2017



Some people sleep, others read books. I caress the cool gunmetal pole and stare outside the train window. Speed and torque whip underneath my feet and I pretend I'm flying: over Japan, over Asia, surpassing the stratosphere, and far into the unknown universe. Metal vibrations. Shuddering sound. Trees and concrete shatter in my window, crushing all forms of logic, reality, sense and familiarity. I am traversing Ebisu to Tokyo station, but I am fleeing.

The cogs inside spin so fast that the speed carries down to my hands. I resist the impulse to tap my fingers, hiding the chaos under a deadpan stare and graceful pose, but I know I was born like this: restless and free.

The air hums and the world slows. Momentum slacks and my feet forget where to go. I stumble as I have forsaken my balance during flight.

My husband smiles at me and motions at his bicep. "Hold on to me," his body calls. The overhead loops are too high, but his right-angled arm is the perfect height. I step forward and smell his shoulder. I release the pole and clasp on to his arm to steady myself.

We ride tethered together. By hands, arms, bodies, limbs. Eyes, hearts, smiles, grins. Devotion? It's just a notion: a decision, to hold on to him. He carries our bags on his back, our belongings of comfort and survival. Never complaining or contemplating the weight or the burden, I try my best to follow his lead.

A second, a minute, a moment of actualization. I forget what I'm fleeing and I

forget why the rush. So I just hold on, to him, and the stillness, and the peace, as
we traverse Ebisu to Tokyo station together.

My outside world blurs and then clears. Sounds swell and then recede as we slow, stop and speed between destinations: Ebisu, Meguro, Gotanda, Osaki... An arpeggio signals the chance to escape every few minutes. *Tsugi Wa Shinagawa Eki*, the female voice says, or, "Next is, Shinagawa station. The doors
will open on the left."

I gasp, just thinking of the rush of running past closing doors. My arms and legs
twitch as the cogs spin faster within. But I have promised him, so I stay.

But with each arrival and departure of new stations and destinations, new destinies and elations, I daydream of stars and strangers: books unread, constellations not conquered, music unheard and songs unsung. Sunsets not cried, journeys not tried, rainstorms untasted and lovers unloved.

As our train approaches and then leaves, a man stares down at the phone in his hand. He never looks up or out. He patiently awaits the other train that will
take him to his destiny. He does not see, or know, or care for me as I bid him
hello, how are you and goodbye. Goodbye content commuter. Farewell fellow traveller.

New universes board and as old ones alight, people whose fate have yet to collide with mine. Our journeys together are brief, only sharing a few minutes
and breaths, but my mind delves and divides into everyone I see, imagining conversations and consequences of us meeting. Skinny-dipping in the lakes of their mind, frolicking through their daffodils, scaling the mountains of their
psyche and then sleeping in the caves of their sadness.

I scan across the cosmos of commuter eyes, but only one pair lingers on me instead of darts away; they are his eyes. He is smiling at me again. Not with upward turned lips, but with downward turned kind eyes, gently holding my face and stroking my unrest.

His smile expects nothing in return. But my eyes can't help but surrender. "Yes,"
they say. My gaze climbs his face and my palm pulses his hand. "Yes. I'm still
yours."
Tamachi, Hamamatsucho... Shimbashi, Yurakcho... Tokyo. Tokyo Eki.

We have arrived in Tokyo station where we will transfer to the Shinkansen, riding up to 260 kilometers an hour. My limbs tingle as I dream of wind, whizzing

below my wings. Because I'm still flying, fleeing, still flinging myself across the unknown universe, still searching stars and still seeking strangers. I live a million fates of every moment, everyday. But when I grow tired of scanning the skies, and the cosmos of commuter eyes disappear, I see him, smiling at me again, welcoming me home with rest.

Metal clashes, sounds still swell and the air continues to slow and speed. The doors open once more as the bells chime to alight. He holds my hand and carries our bags. We exit, and I hold on to him.



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